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Implications for the United States of the Colombian Drug Trade

**Special National Intelligence Estimate
Volume II—Annex E**

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UNITED STATES OF THE
COLOMBIAN DRUG TRADE

VOLUME II—ANNEX E

Information available as of 16 June 1983 was
used in the preparation of this Estimate.

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THE NATIONAL FOREIGN INTELLIGENCE BOARD CONCURS, EXCEPT AS NOTED IN THE TEXT.

The following intelligence organizations participated in the preparation of the Estimate:

The Central Intelligence Agency, the Defense Intelligence Agency, the National Security Agency, and the intelligence organizations of the Departments of State and the Treasury.

Also Participating:

The Assistant Chief of Staff for Intelligence, Department of the Army

The Director of Naval Intelligence, Department of the Navy

The Assistant Chief of Staff, Intelligence, Department of the Air Force

The Director of Intelligence, Headquarters, Marine Corps

Intelligence units in the Drug Enforcement Administration, Department of Justice, and in the United States Customs Service, Department of the Treasury, also contributed heavily in the preparation of this Estimate.

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ANNEX E

LINKS BETWEEN THE NARCOTICS TRADE, GUERRILLA GROUPS, AND THE MILITARY

Insurgent Groups

1. Colombia has long been plagued by armed insurgent groups, guerrillas, and bandits. Terrorism has been endemic in certain rural areas since at least the mid-1950s. The security forces have been able to contain these groups, but have not succeeded in ending their activities. In the early 1970s an urban-based group, the 19th of April Movement (M-19), was founded by several dissident radicals. In general, these groups are vaguely or explicitly leftist.

2. These groups occasionally carry out spectacular actions that embarrass government forces and attract international attention, but they do not threaten the existence of the Colombian Government. Of the half dozen groups now active (see table 11), two are clearly much larger and of more concern to Colombian security officials—the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) and M-19.

Insurgents and Drugs

3. These guerrilla groups initially avoided all connections with narcotics growers and traffickers, except to condemn the corrupting influence of drugs on Colombian society. Now, however, several have developed active links with the drug trade, others extort protection money from traffickers, and some apparently use profits from drugs to buy arms.

The FARC

4. The FARC, the oldest, largest, and currently the most dangerous subversive organization in Colombia, at first stayed away from the illicit drug business to avoid any corrupting influence on the moral principles of the revolutionary ideal. In fact, the FARC even resorted to killing the traffickers and burning their fields in parts of the Llanos. After 1977, various FARC "fronts" entered the drug business as a way of supplementing their original reliance on extortion, kidnapping, and robbery for funds.

Table 11

Estimated Strength of Insurgent Groups in Colombia

Name	Estimated Strength	Location
Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC)	1,400	16 "fronts," in rural areas
19th of April Movement (M-19)	1,000	Urban organizations in Bogota and most major cities plus smaller "columns" in rural areas
National Liberation Army (ELN)	300	Both urban and rural areas
People's Liberation Army (EPL)	300	Both urban and rural areas

5. At first the FARC permitted the cultivation of marijuana and provided protection to the farmers for a price. Activity centered primarily in Meta and Caqueta Departments, but there are reports of FARC protection of marijuana grown in the northwestern part of Antioquia Department as recently as 1981. The FARC was reportedly using this protection money to buy arms, mostly Portuguese-manufactured rifles, that entered the country through the Gulf of Uraba from Panama. The FARC, like the drug traffickers, quickly learned that coca was a highly lucrative crop, and paste was easy to transport and profitable. In the last three years the FARC has become involved in the cultivation, production, and shipping of coca paste from the Llanos. There are reports of planes from Panama bringing in arms and leaving with coca paste (possibly shipped to cities within or outside Colombia for refining) from clandestine airstrips guarded by FARC troops in Caqueta and the Llanos. A new FARC front, the XIV, was organized with the express and only mission of controlling production of coca in

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the Llanos. In fact, the FARC in some areas established quotas, taxes, wages, and rules for workers, producers, and owners of coca fields. Some of this coca money is clearly being used to buy arms.

6. The Army views the FARC move into the drug business as destabilizing to the guerrilla organization. For example, a senior FARC leader has been accused of misuse of funds, and some FARC fronts have ignored orders from higher quarters in order to pursue their own greed. At least one FARC front has been removed from the drug-growing area for political reorientation by the movement's leaders.

The M-19

7. The M-19 is probably the most widely known of the various insurgent groups because of its sensational seizure of the Dominican Embassy in Bogota in February 1980, when it held the US Ambassador and others hostage for 61 days. Under Jaime Bateman Cayon, its leader and a former officer of the Colombian Communist Party youth wing and of the FARC, it appealed for social justice, honest elections, and an end to corruption. It attracted mainly leftwing youths and concentrated on spectacular acts in the cities to attract media attention. In 1981 it enlarged its scope to include rural action in a few areas—a move which took it into an area of drug activity. Nearly 200 M-19 members, including a few Panamanians, who had had training in Cuba, were infiltrated back into Colombia via Panama (with the aid of some members of the Panamanian National Guard). Within weeks, most were killed or captured and the Panamanian and Cuban connection exposed. This led Colombia to suspend diplomatic relations with Cuba and strained its relations with Panama.

8. The Guillot Lara case, discussed on pages 3 and 4, demonstrates that the M-19 received arms through a Colombian drug-trafficking link facilitated by Cuban officials. We do not know whether this mechanism is still in use. Reports from San Jose indicate that members of the M-19 may be involved in narcotics and arms smuggling in Costa Rica. We also have information that the M-19 runs arms into Colombia by way of Panama. But the extent to which the M-19 links narcotics trafficking with arms smuggling is not clear, nor have we much evidence that the M-19 was ever actively involved in drug production and traffick-

ing in Colombia. These rural M-19 cells operating in a drug-growing area may not remain entirely aloof from this lucrative business.

The "Cuban Connection"

10. Cuban involvement with and support for Colombian insurgents has consisted primarily of training M-19 members.

Nicaragua may also have provided training for small numbers of M-19 members en route to El Salvador.

11. The Guillot Lara case (see inset) is proof that Cuba has used Colombian drug smuggling networks to move arms to Colombian insurgents. In this case Cuban officials and Colombian drug traffickers were clearly associated in facilitating narcotics shipments to the United States, Guillot paid the Cubans in hard currency and used his vessels and smuggling network to move arms to Colombia for the insurgents. On the other hand, Cuba rather routinely searches some drug-smuggling ships found in Cuban waters, confiscates drugs found, and often imprisons the crews.

12. We do not know the extent to which Cuba has continued to facilitate drug trafficking, either for money or arms, but these efficient trafficking networks offer that potential whenever Cuba chooses to exploit it. The same mechanisms are available to the Colombian insurgents, with or without Cuban help. Thus far, at least, they do not seem to be depending on drug money to buy arms or support themselves;

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The Guillot Lara Case ^a

The first concrete evidence of Cuban involvement in narcotics trafficking, and of a Cuban narcotics-terrorism-gunrunning nexus, resulted from the arrests of Colombian narcotics trafficker Jaime Guillot Lara in Mexico City (November 1981) and of another well-known trafficker, Juan Lazaro "Johnny" Crump, in Miami (January 1982).

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Guillot appears to have been the key to the connection. He is a native Colombian from Santa Marta, the capital of Magdalena Department on the north coast, a major smuggling region on the Caribbean side of Colombia. He is a career smuggler who has trafficked in cocaine, marijuana, and methaqualone since at least 1976.

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[redacted]

[redacted] Bassols provided Guillot \$1 million in the fall of 1981 to purchase arms in the United States for the M-19. Guillot confessed to Mexican authorities that on 16 October he traveled to the Colombian port of Dibulla, where his boat Zar de Honduras had arrived with part of the arms cargo. The arms had been transferred to the Zar from the Karina off the coast of Panama. From Dibulla the arms were trucked to a clandestine airstrip, where they were guarded by M-19 members until 21 October. Then the M-19, using a hijacked Aeropesca cargo aircraft, transported them to the Oreteguaza River in the Colombian Department of Caqueta. The Colombian Navy sank the Karina, with the remaining arms on board, off the west coast of Colombia. On 25 November the Zar was seized.

[redacted]

Crump indicated that, at this time, he was under Cuban instructions to procure arms in Miami for shipment by Guillot.

Presumably concerned that Colombian authorities were aware of his activities because of earlier seizures of his arms-laden ships off the Colombian coast, Guillot met with two Cuban military officers in Mexico City on 24 November. The Cubans reportedly provided Guillot with a large sum of money for living expenses and obtaining Mexican documentation and legal assistance.

[redacted]

On 25 November Mexican authorities arrested Guillot on immigration charges. The Cuban Embassy approached the Mexican Government in mid-December regarding the release of Guillot;

[redacted]

[redacted] Crump was arrested in Miami in January 1982 on immigration charges and is now participating in the continuing investigations.

Following Guillot's arrest, Colombian authorities requested that Mexico extradite him to Colombia. Mexico rejected the request on the grounds that it did not meet Mexican legal standards, and subsequently sent him to Spain.

Cuban Policy and Motivations Regarding Narcotics Trafficking. The Guillot case represents the first solid evidence we have obtained of Cuban Government involvement in narcotics trafficking. The Castro government has traditionally taken a puritanical stance on narcotics use, viewing it as symptomatic of moral weakness and capitalist decadence. Domestic enforcement has been vigorous and has stressed repression rather than rehabilitation. Cuban authorities have traditionally cracked down hard on smugglers who strayed into Cuban territory. Many aircraft and ships seeking safehaven have been searched thoroughly, and, in some cases, their crews have been jailed simply on suspicion of transporting illegal cargoes.

We do not know who in the Cuban Government controlled the Guillot operation or whether similar arrangements have been made with other traffickers. Given the level of Guillot's Cuban contacts and the political implications of the arrangements, the operation was almost certainly approved at the highest levels of the Havana government. If the Guillot affair were simply a case of corruption by local or midlevel security officials in Cuba, it is unlikely that the Cuban Embassies in Bogota and Mexico City and officers from the America Department of the Cuban Communist Party Central Committee would have been involved. Moreover, senior Cuban officials receive ample material benefits from the state, and Cuba offers few expensive attractions that would absorb such enormous proceeds.

Plausible Denial. Use of established contraband facilities to transport arms to insurgent and terrorist organizations allows the Cubans to support revolution while maintaining plausible denial. During the Nicaraguan revolution the Castro regime used professional arms smugglers to hide its hand in channeling weapons and supplies to the Sandinista insurgents. The success in Nicaragua in 1979 led to a similar Cuba-gunrunner alliance in supplying Salvadoran guerrillas.

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instead they generally rely on extortion, kidnaping, bank robberies, etc., for funds.

The Military and MAS

13. The group called "Muerte a Secuestradores" (MAS), or "Death to Kidnapers," was formed in November 1981 by Fabio Ochoa Restrepo, head of a major Medellin-based trafficking net, and other wealthy Colombians strongly suspected of being involved in cocaine trafficking. It was set up to secure the release of Ochoa's daughter, who had been kidnaped by the M-19. After several deadly actions, primarily against the M-19, the daughter was released by the M-19 in February 1982. There has been speculation since then that the police and even the military are linked with MAS. Not a single important member of MAS has ever been apprehended. This could indicate that the original vigilante group has disbanded and that common criminals or other "rightwing" groups use its name to cover their own involvement in violence. More likely, it indicates that there is, indeed, some connection between MAS and some military or police officers.

14. The M-19 has repeatedly charged that the Colombian Government is involved with MAS; the government has continued to deny it.

[redacted] In February 1983 the Colombian Attorney General publicly implicated 163 persons, including 59 military personnel, allegedly associated with MAS. This brought instant outrage from Minister of Defense Landazabal and other high military officers who accused the Attorney General of

ignoring due process. Landazabal demanded that the AG be chastised and submitted his own resignation because he considered this to be an attack against the entire military institution. While the furor has died down somewhat since then, it is clear that the accusations touched some raw nerves.

15. [redacted]

[redacted] while the Colombian military does not officially assist the MAS, a number of individual military officers have had operational contacts with it and that the MAS is now highly compartmented and organized—employing safehouses and message centers. This compartmentation is said to account for the difficulty the AG has had in his attempts to investigate it. Moreover, many of the killings done in the name of MAS may have been done by military officers who use the name as a convenient cover.

16. It seems probable that some military personnel are both trading on the MAS name and are at least indirectly involved in its activities. At the same time, MAS appears to have expanded into a cluster of vigilante groups (like cattlemen and ranchers) determined to resist the kidnappings and extortion efforts of both insurgent groups and common criminals.

17. Whatever the extent of the ties between MAS and the military, they can only serve to further inhibit forceful action against the major narcotics traffickers associated with MAS. This would be true even if those military officers involved simply work with MAS against their common enemy, the insurgent-extortionist groups. It would be even more worrisome if, over time, the military became more actively involved in the lucrative business.

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